



King County

Ron Sims
King County Executive

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Mark Yango
Charter Review Coordinator

701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3210
Seattle, Washington 98104

King County Charter Review Commission
Governmental Structure Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes – January 29, 2008
KC Chinook Bldg., 5:00pm-5:30pm

The meeting of the King County Charter Review Commission, Governmental Structure Subcommittee was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

Commission members in attendance:

Lois North
Mike Lowry
Sarah Rindlaub
John Jensen
Kirstin Haugen
Dan Gandara
Darcy Goodman
Gary Long
Terry Lavender

Absent:

Trisha Bennett
Tara Jo Heinecke
Greg Hirakawa

Staff:

Mark Yango, Charter Review Coordinator
Corrie Watterson Bryant, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission

Council and PAO Staff:

Ross Baker, Chief of Staff, King County Council
Mike Sinsky, Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Rebecha Cusack, King County Council Liaison to the Commission
Nick Wagner, King County Council Co-Liaison to the Commission
Grace Reamer, Legislative Aide, Councilmember Kathy Lambert, District 3

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Ms. Rindlaub outlined our three issues for discussion at this short meeting:

- Councilmember Lambert's proposal for reconfirming department heads every three years
- Councilmember Lambert's proposal for modifying the Charter Review Commission appointment process
- Elections Division proposal for extending the deadline for filing Charter-based ballot measures with the Elections Division

Reconfirmation of Executive Department Heads every Three Years

Mr. Yango began by reading a statement from Executive Sims, who opposed the potential amendment for the following reasons:

- Executive and departmental responsiveness to council is not a problem
- Would politicize the department heads' selection
- Would dissuade recruitment of department heads

Mr. Gandara agreed with the Executive's arguments. He expressed that it is not a good idea because reconfirmation could affect the department head's work and relationship with the Executive. The Executive is in charge of supervising the heads, as set out in the Charter.

Mr. Gandara continued that this proposal makes department heads no different than appointed commission and board members, in terms of confirmation. However, Mr. Gandara pointed out that there is a big difference between board members and department heads, and said that for at-will employees that answer to the Executive, there is no need for this. Mr. Gandara believes this is a permanent solution to a transitory problem.

Ms. Goodman also felt uncomfortable making a decision on this proposal in a shortened period of time. She believes there is no precedence for this in county government.

Ms. North made a motion to table this proposed amendment. The amendment was passed unanimously.

Charter Review Commission's Appointment Process

The subcommittee reviewed Councilmember Lambert's letter suggesting that the CRC be appointed, but that each councilmember receive two appointments, and the Executive three.

Since the full commission will discuss the issue of whether to elect or appoint the CRC, the subcommittee was in consensus to table the issue until after the full commission discussion.

Elections Division – Deadline for filing Charter-Based Ballot Measures with the Elections Division

Ms. Watterson explained that the elections division approached staff to propose an amendment that would change the deadlines for petitioners to submit charter amendments and county initiatives and referenda.

The deadlines to submit petitions in the charter and state law used to match, but in 1996 state law changed from a deadline of 45 days to 84 days before the election. The charter still specifies a deadline of 45 days.

The Elections division has expressed that this is not enough time to deal with challenges to ballot language, council review for initiatives, and preparation of voter guides and ballots.

Ms. Watterson also explained that this issue was brought to the attention of the commission very recently and Council has not had a chance to thoroughly review the amendment. She asked that this issue just be brought up for discussion but no action be taken this evening.

Mr. Gandara liked the idea of referring to state law as the rule so the Charter Review Commission doesn't have to address this issue repeatedly.

Ms. Goodman asked if this should issue be adopted by ordinance, to give the county more flexibility to change the deadlines.

Ms. Rindlaub followed up with asking why Council needs 90 days to review initiatives. Ms. Cusack responded that in terms of I-25, in depth legal review was needed since there were different opinions in the Prosecuting Attorney's Office on the issue. It took that much time to properly review the amendment.

Mr. Gandara asked if we could change the charter to state 'pursuant to ordinance' instead of the specific deadlines in place now. Mr. Sinsky said that could probably be done.

Ms. Rindlaub asked if this situation has this ever happened before (referring to I-25). Ms. Cusack said that she has only seen this situation happen once. But the council felt jammed during I-25 and the I-24 review process. More time would have been useful there.

Ms. Haugen proposed a minimum number of days to remain in the charter, as well as referring to ordinance.

Mr. Gandara asked if we should consider this idea further at our next meeting and it was met with agreement by everyone.

Ms. Rindlaub asked the staff to work with Mike Sinsky to draft language in preparation for the next committee meeting on February 11. Mr. Yango mentioned that he would invite Sandy McConnell (King County Elections Program Manager for Elections Operations) to speak.

Next regularly scheduled meeting: Monday, February 11, 2008, 5:00 – 8:00 pm

Meeting adjourned: 5:28pm

Respectfully submitted by: Mark Yango

DRAFT